

This special threat advisory is intended to provide situational awareness of threats to public order, public safety, and the security of public officials arising from violent online rhetoric opposing new and ongoing public health restrictions (Information current as of 27 January 2022, 1600hrs). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates as required.

SPECIAL THREAT ADVISORY – UPDATE 2

FREEDOM CONVOY 2022: CONVERGING IN OTTAWA JANUARY 28/29, 2022

KEY POINTS

- Reliable estimates on the number of convoys, vehicles and people arriving in Ottawa for 28/29 January continue to be difficult to obtain. The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) reported 551 vehicles in Ontario at the time of this writing and will continue providing updates as information becomes available.
- The duration of the event in Ottawa is still unknown. Impromptu protests will likely occur with little or no social media advertising beforehand due to the ability to mobilize a large group of people on short notice. News of the Prime Minister isolating at home due to a COVID-19 exposure has resulted in comments suggesting protests wherever he is located.
- This convoy includes individuals with a range of views, some of which are ideologically motivated in nature and others who are not aligned with any specific ideology or group. While there is a significant amount of online chatter encouraging peaceful and lawful protest, concerns exist that the convoy could be exploited by individuals who engage in or promote actions that pose a risk to public and officer safety.

CURRENT STATUS

Opposition to vaccine mandates for truckers continues to drive discussions and receive widespread promotion within anti-public health order networks. As the time of the convoy's arrival in Ottawa draws closer, coverage of the convoy has been reported on Canadian mainstream media outlets, as well as international news and multiple social media platforms. Currently, over six million dollars has been fundraised for the event via the crowdfunding platform GoFundMe.¹

SCOPE, SCALE AND ROUTES

It remains unclear how many transport trucks, passenger vehicles and individuals will arrive in Ottawa between January 28 and 29, 2022. The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has been providing the most

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current numbers to law enforcement partners as information on vehicles entering Ontario becomes available. The following numbers are the latest provided by the OPP with the caveat that reliable counts are challenging as vehicles are joining and leaving the convoys at different points along the route.²

TOTAL (at the time of this writing): 551 vehicles

- West Convoy (Thunder Bay-Sault Ste. Marie - 2022-01-27): 471
- South Convoy A (Windsor – Kingston - 2022-01-27): TBD
- Sarnia Convoy (Sarnia – Kingston - 2022-01-27): TBD
- South Convoy D (Niagara – Kingston - 2022-01-27): 70
- South Convoy E (Vaughan – Kingston - 2022-01-27): TBD
- Hearst Convoy (2022-01-27): 10

(IMCIT comment: These convoys below are located closer to Ottawa and have not started yet, but are anticipated to commence on the estimated dates provided below by the OPP).

- South Convoy F (Owen Sound – Ottawa 2022-01-28): TBD
- South Convoy B (Oshawa – Ottawa 2022-01-29): TBD
- South Convoy C (Six Nations – Ottawa 2022-01-29): TBD
- East Convoy A (Hawkesbury-Gatineau-Ottawa 2022-01-29): TBD
- East Convoy B (Vankleek Hill – Ottawa 2022-01-29): TBD
- Cornwall A (Petro Bass Boundary Rd – Ottawa 2022-01-29): TBD
- Cornwall B (Monkland – Ottawa 2022-01-29): TBD

Some social media accounts are claiming trucker support from the United States (US) is coming to Ottawa.³ A video livestreamed on 2022-01-27 by the “Freedom Convoy 2022” main Facebook page makes the claim, “Politicians in the States are encouraging all their citizens to come and stand with us”.⁴ At this time, however, this information appears limited to online chatter and there has been no information from law enforcement verifying widespread participation from US supporters.

Convoys converging in Kingston on January 27 are expected to leave Kingston on January 28 at 0830hrs and begin to arrive in Ottawa.⁵ ⁶At this time, confirmed activities in Ottawa of convoy participants for a January 28 arrival remains unknown. On January 29, the majority of convoys will be arriving in Ottawa at 1200hrs, meeting at Parliament Hill.⁷

INTENT ONCE IN OTTAWA

There is limited information at this time regarding planned activities once the convoy reaches Ottawa. It is likely, however, that impromptu protests will occur with little or no social media advertising beforehand due to the ability to mobilize a large group of people on short notice.

Various traffic disruptions are expected throughout the city as the convoy converges and the potential for impromptu traffic interruptions throughout the National Capital Region are expected for the duration of the convoy, which is still currently unknown.

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Based on past protests opposing public health orders, it is possible that protected sites and media outlets may be attractive locations for protest. News reports on 2022-01-27, as well as a tweet from the Prime Minister (PM), indicate that he is isolating for five days due to a COVID-19 exposure and will be working from home.⁸ Within minutes of the news, the main Instagram account associated to the convoy, which has over 200k followers, posted the news. This generated comments suggesting that he is hiding and chatter indicated a desire to find out where he is located in order to protest.^{9 10} This news may increase frustrations of individuals associated with the convoy, fueling perceptions that the government is ignoring Canadians and may result in an increase of threats directed towards the PM. It is also possible this may prolong the protest until the PM emerges from isolation.

The fundraiser associated with the convoy continues to increase but there is still no clear indication of how the funds will be dispersed. It is possible that the longer the funds remain held in the GoFundMe account, questions of credibility and requests for refunds could discredit the organizers, leading to frustrations and an increased loss of crowd control among the main organizers.^a

Chatter online is also beginning to question what will happen if the protest is ignored by the government.¹¹ Some responses include hostile rhetoric suggesting that the protest needs to “get violent”¹², while other imagery is suggestive of a permanent gridlock around Ottawa until “freedom” is restored.¹³ No credible threat of violence has been observed in these conversations at this time.

NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Online advertisements for public order events at various overpasses throughout Ontario have been identified with the intent to support and cheer on the convoys coming from various routes. In addition, multiple local events within Canadian provinces have been advertised to take place on January 29¹⁴ in solidarity with the main convoy in Ottawa and could occur at border points or the following government buildings:^{15 16}

- Victoria, Legislative Assembly
- Vancouver, Canada Place
- Calgary, Prince Island Park
- Edmonton, Legislature building
- Regina, Legislative building
- Winnipeg, The Forks
- Toronto, Union Station
- Montreal, Place des arts
- Moncton, Riverfront Park
- St John's, Harbourside Park

GENERAL THREATS

COVID-19 public health measures and the prolonging of existing restrictions have led to increasingly violent rhetoric appearing online within anti-public health order narratives.¹⁷ The IMCIT assesses that opposition to vaccine mandates continues to grow in intensity and could become a potential flash point for acts of violence.¹⁸

^a Social media indicates there have been donations of meals along the journey, as well as some restaurants planning on providing free food for those associated with the convoy once in Ottawa. These offerings have been highly visible on social media. This may lead to questions about what is being done with the money, as part of the funds raised are supposed to go to food according to information on the GoFundMe page.

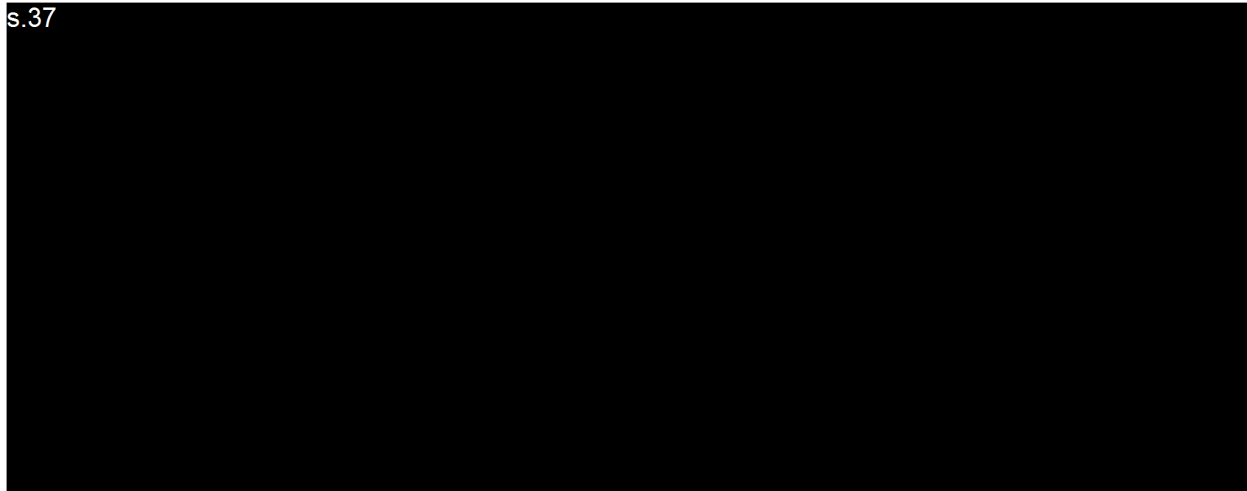
It is important to note that there are a range of people with varying views participating in the convoy and Ottawa protest, ranging from those who have experienced hardships due to COVID-19 to those who are ideologically motivated and see the convoy as an opportunity to further their narratives to a wider audience. Not all individuals support extreme activities and there is a diversity of views regarding the use of violence.^b While there is a significant amount of online chatter encouraging peaceful and lawful protest, concerns exist that the convoy could be exploited by individuals who engage in or promote actions that pose a risk to public and officer safety.

Overall sentiment towards law enforcement remains mixed. In one case, a video posted on 2022-01-25 by an individual known for ethno-nationalist grievances included the comments “If a trucker bursts through that wall, for one, that isn’t terrorism, ok, that isn’t it’s not terrorism but for two, that’s epic”¹⁹ in reference to the construction surrounding Parliament Hill.

There are a number of posts online warning convoy participants to be aware of plants or government provocateurs in the crowd who they allege will try to stir up violence.^{20 21} There is also messaging among the movement for the potential for paid actors to be at the protest in order to cause violence and bring a bad name to the group. These perceived predictions are in line with conspiracies that surrounded the initial online discussion after the January 6, 2021 insurrection in the US. Claims that “antifa” were responsible for an anonymous phone call threatening Ottawa Police have been posted online,²² though the call is still under investigation. Narratives opposing the convoy have also been observed, however, no counter-actions have been identified at the time of this writing.

CROSS-BORDER THREATS

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^b Based on open source information, this convoy will include ideologically motivated individuals with grievances that are anti-government, anti-authority and conspiratorial in nature. Though the purpose of the convoy is not rooted in racially motivated or ethno-nationalist specific grievances, individuals with these views may also be attracted to this event since COVID-19 has amplified existing narratives within these networks. The presence of ideologically motivated individuals does not necessarily mean ideologically motivated criminality or ideologically motivated violence will occur.

The IMCIT is liaising with law enforcement partners to maintain visibility on this event and other events related to the opposition of trucker mandates which are occurring nationally, and will provide updates as required.

Issued by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

Approved by: Director, Directorate of Strategic Intelligence, Federal Policing National Intelligence

¹ <https://www.gofundme.com/f/taking-back-our-freedom-convoy-2022>

² OPP 2022-01-27 - HENDON SITREP 025-2022 FREEDOM CONVOY 2022

³ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=5034569706601284&set=p.5034569706601284&type=3>

⁴ https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=5166848616666775

⁵ <https://canada-unity.com/bearhug/>

⁶ <https://ygknews.ca/2022/01/26/kingston-is-bracing-for-a-truck-convoy-on-thursday/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <https://twitter.com/JustinTrudeau/status/1486704226449379329>

⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZPL5IVLWft/>

¹⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZPL5IVLWft/c/17953601452615752/>

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/310624427062402/posts/497409821717194>

¹² https://www.facebook.com/groups/310624427062402/posts/497409821717194/?comment_id=497688841689292

¹³ https://www.facebook.com/groups/310624427062402/posts/497409821717194/?comment_id=498077228317120

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/News24Wide/status/1486564673659023369>

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Alberta4Liberty/posts/134919755664374>

¹⁶ <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/truckers-opposing-covid-19-vaccine-mandate-plan-weekend-protest-at-n-s-n-b-border-1.5754278>

¹⁷ IMCIT STA 2022-01 – 2022-01-18

¹⁸ IMCIT NTL #2021-07 -- 2021-12-23

Personal Info.

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/thelinecanada/status/148657457343275008>

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²² <https://www.toronto99.com/2022/01/27/antifa-threatens-police-officers-ahead-of-jan-29-rally/>